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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to develop guidelines relating to the problem of disruptive pupils in the classroom. A disruptive student is defined as one who interferes with the learning process. He is often male, physically aggressive, verbally hostile, over-age and frequently absent. The study examines the overlap between disruptive behavior and emotional disturbance; legal aspects and security in secondary schools; the identification and prevention of disruptive behavior; special schools, classes and alternative programs; and the disruptive student in the elementary school. The study indicates that schools need a clearly written policy statement on such subjects as building security, corporal punishment, class size, special classes, suspensions, etc. It concludes that guidelines must be developed locally, with each school district taking into consideration its own needs. Included are some approaches which local schools have instituted for preventing or coping with disruptive students. (Author/HMV)

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DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

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PREFACE

In January 1972, the State Education Department formed a committee to explore ways of helping school districts develop more effective programs for disruptive pupils. The committee was a direct outgrowth of an ad hoc committee on disruptive pupils convened the previous year at the request of the Division of Urban Education. Urban Education had expressed concern over the lack of specific guidelines for the many programs for disruptive pupils which it was funding.

Members of the original ad hoc committee visited various programs. They were impressed by the degree of seriousness with which disruptives were viewed by school people. It was also discovered that the problem went beyond the proper use of Urban Education money since some programs for disruptive students were being funded locally.

The ad hoc committee made its report recommending that the State Education Department leadership demonstrate support by appointing an accredited committee charged with the specific mission of developing guidelines on the problem of disruptive pupils. A new committee was formed containing many members of the original group.

After several months of meetings and deliberations, the committee developed a working draft and made two important decisions. The first was that guidelines must be developed locally with each school district taking into consideration its own needs. We have, therefore, included some samples of various local approaches in section VII of this publication. The second decision was that the committee's draft was insufficient without reaction and feedback from the field. The committee decided to organize a 2-day workshop utilizing some of the most informed people from around the State -- people working with disruptives at every level. The names of these field participants along with the names of the State Education Department committee members who conducted the workshop can be found on pages 20 and 21. Special mention should be given David H. Smith, Associate in Attendance, for doing much of the editing and coordination required to make this publication possible.

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Wallace M. Lornell
Bureau of School Social Services

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Suburban School District
City Schools
School for Boys
Special Classes and Schools
Security in Large Urban Schools
Positive Alternatives to Student Suspensions

Disruptive Students

I. Introduction and Scope

Newspapers and magazines frequently highlight the perplexing subject of disruptive pupil behavior in schools. Educators often respond to a crisis situation involving disruptive students with crash remedial programs rather than carefully planning a preventative program as part of the total educational effort.

A school program for disruptive students should be intertwined with the total educational policy and resources of the district — class size, resource rooms, scheduling, curriculum, buildings, community-school relations, inservice training. A school system which provides individualized instruction, resource rooms, staff participation in curriculum planning will face a different situation than a school with a traditional program.

Also involved are community agencies, particularly local school-police relationships, training schools for delinquents, family court decisions on child placements, availability of day or residential treatment under mental health auspices, and group homes and other programs under the New York State Division for Youth. Schools must communicate frequently with these agencies and develop good working relationships in order to provide educational services to disruptive students.

A disruptive student is usually defined as one who interferes with the learning process. The disruptive is often male, physically aggressive, sometimes violent, and frequently verbally hostile. He is often over age for his grade; his attitude towards school is negative. He is frequently absent or truant. This type of behavior exhibited on the secondary level is often considered a problem to the operation of the school. The elementary school pupil exhibiting essentially the same behavior is likely to be considered less of a problem than his secondary school counterpart and may be classified emotionally disturbed.

Classroom teachers, when given an opportunity to "tell it like it is," are eager to discuss their discipline problems and frequently feel this should be a top priority concern for the school. School personnel readily know the student who fits this category and usually come up with a working definition, such as "one who causes a breakdown in the organization of the classroom" or "aggressive behavior patterns that not only block the pupil's own learning but interfere with the education of other children." Teachers have been vocal in their discussions about disruptive students and frequently request the right to remove or exclude from the classroom children who prevent other students from learning. In some districts attempts have been made to incorporate into the teachers' contract a policy on removal of disruptive students.

Programs for disruptive students must conform with New York State Education Law on suspension of pupils and exemption regulations as well as with school district policies and procedures. Individual programs, qualified pupil services personnel, special classes, and, in some cases, special schools are required to develop appropriate learning activities for disruptive students. If such programs are not provided, the disruptive student, unless he is removed from the educational scene, denies his peers the opportunity to obtain an education. Some administrators develop quasi-legal ways of removing the most physically aggressive youngsters from school. Some common methods which may be outside the boundaries of sound educational practice are

- referral to family court
- suspension awaiting a psychiatric diagnosis
- suspension awaiting a probation report
- pupil not to return without both parents coming to school for interview
- encouraging work-study plan which is almost all work and little or no study
- ignoring or subtly encouraging nonattendance.

II. Legal Aspects and Security in Secondary Schools

A paramount need at the junior high and high school level is to provide a setting where students and faculty can be secure from the danger of physical assault. In many urban schools this is a serious problem. Consequently, school districts arrange for security guards in the building and around the premises, screen visitors carefully, place plexiglass in windows, install deadlocks on certain doors, and take other security measures. In some schools municipal police are assigned to patrol the halls on a regular basis. If these police possess special qualifications and training, they can be a positive force for promoting school harmony. On the other hand, police who do not relate well with youth may heighten school tension and may inadvertently cause disruptive behavior. A clear understanding between school administrators and police officials prior to an emergency is essential. Legal authority to search lockers and rules regarding the interrogation of students must be clearly understood. All students, officers, and school officials should be aware of their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

School administrators should recognize that places where students congregate are the most likely areas for confrontation and potential violence. Consequently, the main door entrance, lunch rooms, assembly rooms, lavatory areas, large study rooms, and hallways should be carefully supervised.

Many student disruptions can be prevented by sensitive administrative procedures and planning. Included are programs that promote the feeling of confidence in the administration by students, faculty, and the community. Pupil accounting procedures which minimize red tape in recording attendance and tardiness and yet prevent students from roaming the halls or indulging in selective attendance of classes are advisable. Faculty awareness of unique community feelings of an ethnic or social class nature is helpful. Participation by students, faculty, and community in establishing the regulations

in which they are involved so there is a genuine sense of ownership can help reduce the number of incidents. Rearrangement of large building programs into smaller decentralized operations can contribute to a more peaceful school climate.

III. Identification and Prevention

The dilemma facing educators regarding disruptions is the recognition that there is overlap between disruptive behavior and emotional disturbance, between a student who is temporarily upset for a few days and a chronically disruptive youth, between the pupil who is reacting in a hostile manner to an ineffective curriculum or class schedule and the pupil who consistently exhibits asocial delinquent behavior, between the child who is having a personality clash with a specific teacher and the chronically disruptive youngster.

Most educators recognize the danger of segregating all "problem children" in one class or school on the basis of a simplistic behavioral description. Also, they know that a sensitive, creative teacher can resolve many problems before they result in disruption. Administrators are concerned that if the school system provides teachers with easy removal of students, some children will be quickly labeled and inappropriately placed. Consequently, many administrators avoid developing special class programs for disruptive pupils.

A few students inevitably must be removed from the regular classroom because educators do have a responsibility to provide for the safety and to protect the rights of students who are prohibited from learning by the chronic disruptive behavior of a classmate. In some cases this removal may be only for a few minutes or for an hour or it may represent assignment to a special class or to a separate building.

Consideration of the following questions should assist the school in developing programs to minimize disruption.

1. Are there genuine attempts to individualize instruction?

2. Are there adequate diagnostic and pupil services specialists (psychologists, counselors, social workers) available in the system?

3. Does the district have a functioning Committee on the Handicapped to carefully review all children with special needs?

4. Are self-contained classrooms available at the secondary level?

5. Have children with problems been given a chance in a small class situation?

6. Are teacher aides available in the classrooms which serve potentially disruptive youngsters?

7. Are there adequate work-study programs available at the secondary school level?

8. Do the school policies permit a shortened school day for certain students?

9. Are the curricular offerings flexible and diversified? Do the students and teachers give status to the courses offered to the nonacademic student?

10. Can home instruction programs including group home instruction be used creatively, efficiently, and effectively?

11. Are behavior modification techniques utilized in some classrooms?

12. Do the police and other law enforcement officials have an opportunity outside of a crisis situation to meet with school personnel to explain their functions?

13. Are resource rooms, learning centers, and other alternatives available to all pupils?

14. Are inservice opportunities available for staff to learn about ethnic group values and life styles and to examine their own attitude toward cultural diversity and atypical behavior?

15. Do teachers have an opportunity to participate in the school district's policies on class discipline, pupil suspension, exemptions, etc.?

16. Are halls, lavatories, and playgrounds adequately supervised to prevent overstimulated and unstructured behavior?

17. Do pupils have an opportunity to discuss their problems in confidence with qualified pupil services personnel?

18. Is group and/or peer counseling available under the direction of qualified pupil services personnel?

19. Are mental health facilities, child welfare, and family court liaison services available and understood by school personnel?

20. Can teachers recognize and admit difficulty in reaching certain students and yet not feel threatened by loss of self-esteem or administrative censure?

IV. Special Schools, Classes, and Alternative Programs

School districts which have established special buildings for disruptive students or special programs within a regular school building should be aware of the self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome and the potential danger of labeling youngsters. A clear method of identifying pupils who must be removed from the regular program is essential. Usually, a clinical psycho-social history is advisable, as is close parental participation including a visit to the school or class. Of equal importance is the careful selection of staff who have had successful experience working with this type of student. Because these students are usually underachievers as well as hostile, it can be very draining emotionally for staff members. Teachers who are expected to work with these students day after day without adequate backup help and support can soon lose their enthusiasm and commitment. Psychological and social work consultation should be readily available. A regular progress conference on each pupil is advisable. Class size will vary according to the unique composition of each group, but will seldom exceed 15 students and might well include a teacher aide. Teachers should personally participate in all reviews of students' progress and in decisions regarding new students.

Special schools and classes should offer an easy access to the regular classrooms, and this reentry should be planned carefully to prevent regression and recidivism. Experience has demonstrated that unless these classes and schools are carefully planned with suitable physical facilities, modified schedules, and creative curriculums, they do not succeed and may actually be harmful. Many disruptive children who come from chaotic homes need a structured but nonpunitive program. This prescription is easy to write but difficult to deliver.

For some students a reassignment from a large impersonal school to a small alternative or mini-school results in a remarkable change in attitude. Students should have the choice of visiting the alternative program prior to making a decision to attend. The attitude of the faculty is one of the most significant elements in a successful program. Disruptive students readily recognize when a teacher accepts them for what they are; they appreciate it when the teachers do not keep referring to their previous "bad" record.

V. Elementary School Programs

Elementary level programs for potentially and actually disruptive pupils should not be restricted to segregated classrooms nor categorized as special education, exceptional education, or education for the handicapped; all too often such educationally isolated programs prove counterproductive. In addition to avoiding the special class or handicapped labels, elementary schools should have resource rooms readily available. A variety of techniques and procedures should be incorporated into the regular school program to provide individual instruction for these children who need it. Success at an early age is a vital factor in the development of a positive self-image and is a great deterrent to disruptive behavior. Many schools have had success with the following:

- multiage grouping
- flexible modular scheduling
- learning skills centers
- individual instructional help by volunteers and older students
- "school without wall" approaches
- intensified instrumental music programs
- ego building programs
- expanded extra-curriculums
- group home instruction
- tutorial programs
- longer and more frequent physical education classes
- paraprofessional "chaperones"

VI. School Policy

School districts need a clearly written policy statement and an understanding of education law on such subjects as corporal punishment, class size, special classes, suspensions, sending children to the office and/or home for disciplinary reasons, building security, bomb scares, and the calling of police. These policies should be developed with the participation of teachers, parents, students, and community representatives as well as the school board and the school administrators. Some educators seem to feel that acknowledging the need for a policy on disruptive behavior is an indication that the school system has failed. Conversely, some administrators and community groups feel that an absence of such programs indicates that their school district has no disruptive pupils. A zero-reject education system is an important goal, but the school district has the responsibility to develop a policy which recognizes this goal in relation to reality. Each school district must develop its own broad policies, and individual schools must tailor these district policies and procedures to meet local situations.

(Boards of Education are now required under article 55 chapter 740 of the Education Law to adopt regulations governing the conduct of students, teachers, and other staff members as well as visitors and other licensees and invitees on school property. Boards must provide a program for enforcement of these regulations and such regulations must have been filed with the Regents and Commissioner of Education by November 30, 1972.)

Hopefully, this publication will be helpful to those charged with the responsibility of working with disruptives and will serve as a vehicle for discussion with faculty, students, Boards of Education, and concerned citizens.

VII. Illustrations

The following illustrations have been selected from the voluminous material the committee gathered while compiling data on disruptive pupils. The actual school names have not been used, and all of the samples have been somewhat abbreviated.

Our intent here is to suggest to school personnel the wide range and variety of the disruptive pupil problem and to demonstrate different ways various school districts have tried to deal with the problem.

We do not offer these illustrations as "model programs" but feel that their variety demonstrates why the committee decided that guidelines must be locally developed.

SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
(5 elementary, 2 secondary schools)

Project on Disruptive Students

Last year the faculty advisory committee was very emphatic in its selection of the problem of disruptive student behavior. A study of the situation included meetings with faculties of all school and pupil personnel staff.

A disruptive student "is one who causes a breakdown in the organization of the classroom." Some of the behavior exhibited by this type of pupil may be inattention, aggressiveness, immaturity, disorganization, inability to get along with others. Some underlying causes of disruptive behavior are located in the home and the community, but the schools themselves also contribute to the problem. Large school units seem to breed disruption, and this impersonalized structure might be improved by developing a "school within a school" concept.

The following recommendations are suggestions to alleviate certain situations and are not considered final resolutions.

Recommendations:

1. There is a real need to maintain a low pupil/teacher ratio for certain learning groups so that the teacher may give more personalized, tailored instruction to meet individual student needs. Immature students at the elementary level and disruptive students at higher levels frequently are in low achieving groups or lowest track courses. A maximum ratio of 18:1 is warranted.

2. The Resource Room concept, as currently in operation at the Downtown School, be expanded to include at least one such room in each elementary school. P.P.S. records indicate a student population that could be well served by a facility of this type. We, further, urge that it be staffed with specially trained male teachers since most of the problem students are boys, many of whom need a strong male figure with whom to identify.

3. Fixed time schedules for all elementary and secondary pupils appear to be unrealistic in terms of pupil needs. Therefore, adjustment of time schedules to meet the needs of pupils is necessary, recognizing

that for certain pupils a shorter day may be beneficial. Older students with a history of behavior problems could have a hand-tailored schedule to permit early dismissal to work, etc.

4. Often student disruptive behavior involves a teacher who lacks the attitudes and specific skills most needed to cope with the situation. We recommend that books, periodicals, etc., be available in each building for use by the staff. A volunteer faculty committee could be established in each building to keep abreast of the literature and conduct periodic faculty discussions of the problem. Some time should be set aside periodically to review the nature of the disruptive child, reasons for his behavior, and best possibility for solution, with emphasis on the positive.

5. Wherever possible, pupils within walking distance should be excused for lunch. This may well provide the needed change of pace and energy release that now contribute to disruptive behavior. Time schedules may need to be altered accordingly.

6. Establish "Project Caring" -- volunteer staff members that would act as supportive listeners to pupils in a crisis situation. He/she would work with the student in an informal, nonthreatening manner in such a way that the student would be made to feel that someone cared.

7. Establish an inservice training program on a volunteer basis for faculty and parents in the community.

8. Explore a variety of approaches to reach the disinterested and disruptive student. There is a need for vocational training through and expansion of the B.O.C.E.S. program.

9. When teachers are recruited, an increased effort must be made to look for a "dimension" of human understanding and kindness that will not appear on college transcripts but perhaps is in short supply even among the best of certified candidates.

10. There is a need for direct interaction on a regular basis between students, faculty, and administration on problems of mutual interest.

Chairman
Faculty Advisory Committee

CITY SCHOOLS

TO: The Superintendent

FROM: Faculty Committee on Student Behavior

SUBJECT: Recommendations for Secondary Schools

1. That small group and individual counseling with troubled adolescents should become the principal role of the guidance counselor.

2. That counselors should be significantly relieved from student scheduling activities. A more systematic approach could place responsibility on individual students, parents, and teachers for scheduling decisions.

3. That counselors concern themselves with fewer students, emphasizing those students who have exhibited severe behavior disorders, either "acting out" or "withdrawn." It is the opinion of this committee that indepth contact with troubled individuals would be more beneficial than present guidance practices.

4. That students who become chronic discipline, attendance, or failure problems should be referred to group counseling rather than the present typical administrative punishments.

5. That troubled adolescents who show markedly severe symptoms of anti-social behavior, drug addiction, or dependence, acute withdrawal behavior or family breakdown should be immediately referred to public and private agencies to handle such problems.

6. That referrals to such agencies should be made at the discretion of the small group counselors after consultation with the school psychologist and parents.

7. That training in small group communication should be provided counselors and interested teachers using such capable consultants.

8. That individual awareness and sensitivity be given priority over academic education for the troubled adolescent. Teachers who demonstrate an affinity to such children and are effective in small group counseling should be relieved of some class duties and be assigned to such activities as a regular duty.

9. That the resources for special classes for emotionally disturbed students be investigated as to reallocation to provide a full-time teacher-counselor-social worker to conduct small groups and handle individual problems within each secondary school as well as giving inservice training to staff.

10. That an effective human relations program be implemented K-12 as an effort to prevent serious racial problems in the secondary school.

11. That more curriculum alternatives be created for minority group children.

12. That designated interested personnel in each of the secondary schools be assigned the task of contacting dropouts at regular intervals in an attempt to keep them informed regarding educational opportunities.

DESCRIPTION OF A SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS

This school is designed for boys who are disruptive and currently on suspension (grades 7, 8, 9, 10). Youngsters are placed there by the pupil personnel services office upon careful evaluation of the PPS team from the suspending school.

There are approximately 100 students enrolled. The average daily attendance runs from 75 to 80 percent which is better than they had in a regular school setting. The physical facilities are excellent; although the building is old it is very well maintained. Most of the equipment from the vocational high school days has been left. There are machine shops, wood shops, a drafting room, a large gym, and an indoor pool.

The school is staffed by carefully selected male teachers and several male aides. Also it has the services of professional football players, and there is an athletic emphasis in the total program. The pupil services team includes an attendance teacher - 3 half days a week; a guidance counselor - 2 full days a week; a social worker - 3 half days a week; and the services of a psychologist - ½ day a month.

Substitute teachers are carefully screened, and usually classes will double up rather than bring in someone new and untried. Class size is usually around seven. There is one principal, and he is assisted by the guidance counselor, who also has many administrative responsibilities in addition to counseling.

A parent must accompany the student on his first day. At this time, the teacher and the pupil personnel services team have a conference with the parent and the child. Any further parent contact is done by the social worker or attendance teachers through home visits.

This school year 54 students had been returned to a regular high school program. The length of stay for a youngster is from 1 month to a year. A student is returned to a regular school when the teacher recommends a staff conference to consider his return. The local pupil personnel services team is then called in to make the final decision. If it is agreed by all, the pupil personnel services central office is notified and a receiving school is recommended. The final decision is made by the central pupil personnel services office so that local building principals cannot veto the decision. The attitude of the receiving school is an important element in the adjustment of the student in the regular school program.

SPECIAL CLASSES AND SCHOOLS

CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

These are the hyperaggressive and destructive pupils whose behavior ranges from the endless disruption of the class and school routines to extremely serious sociopathic behavior. These children are given to acting-out their behavior conflicts impulsively; they reveal little frustration tolerance. Suspicion, defiance, and projection of their own hostilities are conspicuous aspects of their malfunctioning. They tease, intimidate, and inflict physical violence upon those unable to protect themselves. Such disturbed youngsters generate waves of disorder by influencing children who have adequate controls to behave in a similar manner.

The goals of the program are

1. to develop effective procedures by which to identify emotionally and socially disturbed children in the earliest grades;

2. to provide a resource for disruptive children who are damaging the normal functioning of regular classes;

3. to prevent the development of serious maladjustment by helping disturbed children before their problems become deep rooted;

4. to build a coordinated rehabilitation program under both educational and clinical supervision that will include teacher selection, teacher training, and a carefully planned curriculum, as well as other built-in safeguards; and

5. to develop school and community resources cooperatively so as to mitigate effects of multiple detrimental controls in the child's malfunctioning.

Format of Class

There are three teachers assigned to every unit of two classes. The third or auxiliary teacher serves as a replacement when either home teacher is absent; she also assists the home teacher with individual and group work and relieves each home teacher for one period a day during which she develops a curriculum area that has been jointly planned by the three teachers. The auxiliary teacher also provides assistance on an emergency basis for children who need momentary separation from the group. She is a primary resource in helping the other teachers to develop individual case studies and group process reports as well as in supporting the weekly team conferences by drawing up the agendas and keeping minutes. The daily schedule includes lunch as a curriculum period since the home teacher and her children lunch together, and the school day is consequently shortened by one period.

THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The underlying premise of our identification and screening process is that since a child spends an important segment of his early life in school, the school will inevitably accumulate evidence with regard to his basic adjustment patterns. These patterns reveal themselves in the academic, social, and personality areas, as well as in the physical. Every school system collects cumulative data by way of its periodic reports, grades, examinations, standardized tests, health evaluations, and interviews with the children and parents. All of this data is usually summarized on record cards, which can be rewardingly revealing when they are interpreted. Also readily available are rich supplementary resources in the form of special personnel of the schools and community agencies who have come to know some of the children.

TEAM MEETINGS

The weekly team conference is the most important single tool within the program. It is essential for a coherent, continuous, and sophisticated interplay of a multidisciplinary perspective and experience applied to the problems of disturbed children and their supportive personnel. The agenda explores such items as teacher anecdotal records of each child, team relationships, the pooling of family case material side by side with efforts to individualize the curriculum, problems of setting limits, and the meaning of variations in the symptomatic behavior of a child.

SECURITY IN LARGE URBAN SCHOOLS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Laminated Identification Cards for Students and Staff

There is general agreement that a permanent, plastic type laminated ID card which includes a photograph of the student or staff member should be required for all levels of the school system. The card could be a multipurpose type, useful for public transportation, checking books in the library, free lunch when appropriate, attendance, and lateness. Simple machines such as those used in commercial establishments could be provided to each school. Pupils entering after the regular time or checking books from the library could be identified in this manner. There seems to be great support among staff, students, and parents for this type of identification device.

The cost would be minimal if this were done as a citywide contract.

Student Passes

There is a difference of opinion about the use of official passes from classrooms or offices. A number of schools function well without them. However, the large majority of staff members appear to favor passes because they limit the number of pupils in the halls between periods. All passes should be large and durable. Most schools do not permit students out of the room 5 minutes prior to the end of a period or after the beginning of a period. An alternative or complement to the pass is a sign-out book in each classroom with printed pages indicating the pupil's name, destination, and time in and out. The book should have a distinctive cover, colored and visible.

Cutting Control

Many schools are inundated by clerical procedures necessary for cutting control. As a result, there is little time to work with cutters. A self-carboning, multipurpose cut card would do much to alleviate this problem.

Bilingual Absentee Cards

Absentee notification sent to parents on postal card forms using addressograph stickers or plates should be prepared as bilingual notification. Many schools are in areas where parents cannot read English. Alternative language notification should be available.

Cafeteria Control

A major source of disruptions in most schools is the cafeteria. One way to reduce those problems that are inherent in the typical high school would be to clear the cafeteria several minutes before allowing new groups of students to enter. Program cards should be clearly stamped with the periods to which pupils are assigned. Large cafeterias should be divided into smaller units to prevent mass disruptions. This would entail the erection of partitions either on a permanent or flexible basis. Metal frames used to support large plastic refuse bags should be placed at the end of each table. Several schools have used this device and have found it an improvement over the use of garbage cans.

Visitor Control

Visitors coming into the school building should be required to enter at the front door. They should be challenged and a pass should be provided directing them to the office where they wish to conduct business. An escort should be available to assist a visitor in locating the proper office. An intercommunication telephone should be in the front lobby of each school to permit a call to ascertain whether the staff member is available to meet with the visitor.

A record should be kept of the time in and out for each person visiting the building. School aides or student guides are appropriate personnel for service at the visitors desk.

Programming

Programming must be done prior to the beginning of each school semester, even if this involves summer reorganization. One of the most disruptive situations in the school is the long delay for class assignments at the beginning of the term because of problems of equalization. The use of the computer would minimize this problem.

Positive Alternatives to Student Suspensions

Within the county schools for the past 2 years there has been a documented increase of unacceptable pupil behavior which has led to an increased use of suspensions. It is difficult to establish the educational and social loss to the students who are suspended from school; however, it is known that some of the most costly consequences of student suspensions are the increased possibility that suspended students may leave school before successfully completing requirements for graduation and may become involved in illegal or immoral behavior.

There is a great need in our schools today to help students to develop the kinds of school attitudes and values that will lead to the adoption of acceptable behavior. A necessary first step is to help students behave appropriately within school in order to prevent confrontations which lead to unacceptable behavior resulting in suspensions.

One high school and two junior high schools have been selected as pilot schools for the program. Promising activities implemented in these schools will be shared with all secondary schools.

It is hoped that the objectives listed below will be attained in pilot schools.

1. There will be a significant decrease in the number of students suspended from school.
2. There will be a significant decrease in the number of students referred to the deans or other administrative personnel for punishment because of unacceptable behavior.

The following sequence of activities will be carried out in order to achieve the above objectives.

1. Staff Development Activities

   The administrative, instructional, and pupil personnel staff members of participating pilot schools will be provided with inservice programs and followup consultation which will assist each staff member to

   a. avoid communications which have a depreciating effect upon an individual
   b. foster students' self-control and self-discipline while avoiding both authoritarian and permissive approaches to discipline
   c. involve students in rule setting and working out contracts which define expected behavior
   d. resolve classroom conflicts through mutual problem solving
   e. consistently implement principles of positive reinforcement
   f. reserve judgments while listening to students to help them solve their own problems
   g. accurately discriminate and understand the feelings of students
   h. effectively communicate to a student an empathic understanding of his feelings
   i. produce a relationship of mutual respect between school staff and students
   j. constructively confront a student with the staff member's own concerns when the student behaves in ways unacceptable to the staff members

2. Parent Training Activities

A series of meetings will be conducted for parent groups concurrently with the staff development activities for professional staff. Parents will be taught to use child-rearing techniques which emphasize a "no-lose method of raising responsible children." Parents will be helped to understand their children and be given skills which will help them to resolve conflicts with their children.

3. Time-Out Room

There will be established "time-out" rooms in each of the three pilot schools. These time-out rooms will be under the supervision of a paraprofessional who will work in coordination with the deans, counselors, teachers, and administrative staff. Ideally, these special rooms will be equipped with study carrels and educational media.

The purpose of the time-out room will be to establish a place where a student may go prior to the development of a confrontation. A second purpose of the time-out room will be as a place where students may go during the same class period for two or more days when time is needed to resolve a problematic situation. The time-out room will also serve as an inschool suspension center where students might spend the major part of the day for one or more days. In either instance, students will receive assignments from their regular teachers and be given an opportunity to keep up with their classwork. In most cases, students will be permitted to attend physical education classes and special interest classes and will be able to take normal breaks.

The time-out room will operate as a retreat and a place for independent study. The purpose of this resource area is not to punish, but to provide time which will permit both pupils and staff members to consider ways of resolving problems without the pressure of overcharged emotional involvement.

4. Conferences, Counseling, and Group Work

Although the time-out room itself will not be an active intervention program, pupil services specialists will periodically meet with students from the time-out room. Both individual counseling and group work procedures will be implemented in providing help for students who spend more than three class periods in the time-out room. These professional workers will be skilled in helping students feel understood, work through their hostilities, and become able to select and test out solutions for their problems.

5. Intensive Intervention

Additional assistance will be provided for an estimated 1 percent of pupils who continue to have difficulty. A school psychologist and a social worker will be employed to work exclusively with behavior problems in the selected pilot schools. A student's total family may also become involved in therapeutic activities at this point.

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